

# **CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR MICHIGAN STATE PARKS**

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

Carl T. Johnson Hunting and Fishing Center

Mitchell State Park

Cadillac, Michigan

## ***MINUTES***

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Murdock Jemerson, Chair

James Bradley

Betsy Clark

Tom Ferguson, Vice Chair

Bob Hoffmeyer

Mike McDonald

Chuck Nelson

Mary Pitcher

Bill Rose

Todd Scott

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Tom Bailey

Rev. Hurley Coleman, Jr.

Chris Graham

Jim Hendricks

Kathy Lewand

Sam Washington

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mary Brown

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT**

Sandra Clark

Curtis Hertel

Donna Stine

### **DNR SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT**

Ron Olson, Chief

Vicki Anthes

George Cameron

Tony Herek

Harold Herta

Yolanda Taylor

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Murdock Jemerson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. with roll call, introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public appearances.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

No discussion or opposition to the Minutes. The June 13, 2007 Minutes were approved and adopted by the Committee.

**PURE MICHIGAN PRESENTATION**

Chair Jemerson introduced George Zimmerman, Vice President of Travel Michigan. George Zimmerman gave a presentation to the Committee on the Travel Michigan marketing campaign. He mentioned that they have appropriated \$13.2 million in Fiscal Year 2007 for their total promotional budget (\$5.7 million from the General Fund Promotion Fund, and \$7.5 million from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs Fund, which is ½ of the \$15 million appropriated). However, other states are spending a lot more to promote tourism in their states. For example, Hawaii has spent nearly \$71 million; Pennsylvania and Illinois have spent nearly \$65 million.

Travel Michigan started with three partnerships and they now have 28 partnerships representing more than 75 destinations with \$1.2 million in matching funds. Some of those joint partnerships in advertising include TV and radio stations, printed materials, outdoor writers and on-line. They are also doing joint advertising in and out-of-state with partners on the north coast and in Sault Ste. Marie, Traverse City, Muskegon, beach coasts, harbor country, Ludington, The Henry Ford Museum, Detroit, Saginaw Valley, and others. They are looking at partnering next year with group tour industries.

The campaign was launched in April, 2007 and, since then, [www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org) has had the most traffic and is the most popular state tourism website.

Questions were raised regarding their efforts to promote state parks in Michigan, their willingness to partner with the state to help market the state parks and recreation system, and if there are any restrictions or requirements for using the “Pure Michigan” brand.

Mr. Zimmerman responded that the state should have a budget to market our state parks and recreation areas, as well as all recreational opportunities that we offer and administer. It is a product and should be marketed as one. Although they do advertise some of the state parks, beaches and other recreational areas in this state with pictures on their website and in their ads, the pictures are non-specific because they are promoting the entire State of Michigan. However, he did mention that the state parks and recreation system would definitely qualify as a partner with Travel Michigan and they don’t really care where the funding comes from or how much. If we want to partner with others (i.e. sponsors) to raise money towards promotional efforts, they are more than willing to discuss options to do more marketing for the state parks and recreation system through their website. As far as using the “Pure Michigan” brand, they do allow the use of their brand, although there is some paperwork involved and they do policing efforts to ensure that it is not being used inappropriately. He further mentioned that state parks are individual entities, so we could consider partnering with local visitor’s bureaus or the local chamber of commerce, and he would be willing to discuss the possibility of doing a state park-specific ad to determine if it would be a successful ad/campaign.

Vicki Anthes commented that there are other states that market and promote their state parks. In Michigan, we are always under the assumption that everybody knows that Michigan state parks are great; however, we should not always assume that everybody knows this and where they are all located. Ron Olson commented that we do have popular sites, such as Ludington State Park. We should, however, do more advertising and marketing to promote other state parks or recreation areas, especially those that are less popular and underutilized.

Mary Pitcher responded that we should advertise the assets of this state, the authenticity of some of the sites and what is offered in this state. However, we better be prepared to stand up to the popularity and deliver what we offer in these ads.

Chuck Nelson asked how this campaign differs from other campaigns in the past, such as “Say Yes to Michigan” and “Great Lakes, Great Times,” and why they feel this campaign will make a difference. Mr. Zimmerman responded that this is a new effort so they really won’t know how successful it is in comparison to other campaigns for at least a year or two down the line. However, based on the popularity of the “I Love New York” campaign, and from an agency perspective and consumer feedback so far, they feel that the brand adoption, “Pure Michigan,” may be the new, highly successful campaign for Michigan.

Tom Ferguson commented that considerations should also be made to market with other states, especially on hot days, to attract travelers and visitors to the beaches.

Chair Jemerson thanked Mr. Zimmerman for his presentation and asked that the Department and park staff consider meeting with Mr. Zimmerman to discuss marketing options for the state parks and recreation system.

## **NEW GREEN BUILDING DESIGN PRESENTATION**

Vicki Anthes gave a presentation to update the Committee on the new green building designs that are being considered for all future renovations or new construction projects within state parks or recreation areas.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION REPORTS AND UPDATES**

### **Racing for Wildlife Update**

Ron Olson gave the Committee an update on discussions with The Conservation Fund and The Ryan Newman Foundation and their interest in partnering with the state parks and recreation system in reopening the Mill Lake Youth Camp at the Waterloo Recreation Area. An announcement will be made regarding this new partnership at the August 18 NASCAR race at the Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Michigan, and that this is the first state that they have partnered with to help promote educational, outdoor opportunities and experiences for families and children.

**Promotional Specialist**

A copy of the position description for a promotional specialist within the State Parks and Recreation Division was provided to the Committee, where most of their efforts will focus on marketing and promoting the state parks and recreation system.

**Parks and Boating Survey Update**

Chuck Nelson gave an overview of the results from the boating and park surveys that were distributed. They are still in the process of compiling the results, with only 80% being received thus far. They are moving ahead, however, by having the surveys analyzed and entered into a database, and will have a written report/update for this Committee in the near future.

**PRD Strategic Planning Update**

A written report regarding the status of the Parks and Recreation's Strategic Planning efforts was provided to the Committee. No questions were raised and there were no further discussions regarding this report. Staff did mention, however, that they are moving forward with plans to conduct one-on-one interviews with various stakeholders throughout the state to gather input regarding the state parks, recreation and boating systems.

**Legislative Updates**

A written report regarding various legislation that does or may have an affect on the state parks and recreation system was provided to the Committee. No questions were raised and there were no further discussions regarding this report.

**Land Issues**

A written report regarding the status of various land issues that affect the state parks and recreation system was provided to the Committee. No questions were raised and there were no further discussions regarding this report.

**PARKS AND RECREATION PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL REPORTS**

A written, financial status report regarding revenues, camping and harbor nights, boating access and motor vehicle permit sales, with comparisons to last years statistics, was provided to the Committee. No questions were raised and there were no further discussions regarding this report.

Ron Olson mentioned that the financial report contained in their packets will be a standard, written report that will be provided to the Committee for each meeting, along with the Strategic Planning, Legislative Updates, and Land Issues reports.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Joint Report of the Fee/Short-Term and Long-Term Finance Subcommittees**

Chuck Nelson reported that, after meeting, it was recommended that the two subcommittees, the Fee/Short-Term and the Long-Term Finance Subcommittees, be merged into one "Finance Subcommittee" to more effectively focus on long-term sustainable funding for the state parks and recreation system. Short-term issues, such as fees, can also be addressed more effectively by merging these two subcommittees into one. He presented a Resolution for consideration.

Chuck Nelson motioned for approval of this Resolution; Betsy Clark seconded the motion; there were no objections and the motion unanimously carried.

He also reported that the subcommittee discussed several short-term financing issues at their morning meeting, to include the financial status report that was provided and the need to discuss ways to increase revenues next year. He reminded the Committee that, effective in 2008, there will be a \$2 increase at 36 state parks and recreation areas that did not receive an increase in camping fees the last time around. He also reported that almost ¼ of state park revenues set aside for capital outlay improvements comes from oil and gas revenues, which is not a sustainable funding source. The subcommittee will be looking at a number of fee strategies for a more sustainable funding source for future revenues and capital outlay improvements and projects. Some options may include differential pricing for waterfront versus non-waterfront sites, seasonal sites, weekend versus weekday reservations, extra fees for full service hookup sites, and partnering with RV storage facilities for lesser used parks or seasonal parks, to include the 36 lesser used parks that will receive a \$2 increase in 2008. The subcommittee also recommends piloting a park that is strongly linked to both boating and camping, such as Mitchell, Aloha, Interlochen, Yankee Springs and South Higgins Lake State Parks.

Betsy Clark commented that, if this is done right, we may be eligible to obtain waterways funds for certain facilities and capital improvements.

Chuck Nelson mentioned that a prime pilot location would be the Rockport site, which has tremendous recreational opportunities for both campers and boaters alike. This location could be developed to provide boaters with pull up docks, electrical and other hook-up type camping sites.

Chuck Nelson further commented that this subcommittee will begin working on fee issues and take a closer look at the license plate proposal. He mentioned that he would like to connect with Montana to determine how their license plate fee system is working.

Questions were raised regarding the status of the long-term, conservation funding strategy by the Conservation Summit. As last reported by Rachel Kuntzsch, the most favored approach would be a tax on sand and gravel and other minerals. However, she also stated that getting something through the legislature this fiscal year was not promising due to the focus on the state's budget deficit.

Mary Brown commented that she is not very confident that we will get anything through the legislature this fiscal year and that getting any type of tax passed will be a tough fight.

Chuck Nelson stated that this subcommittee will obtain more information on the status of the Conservation Summit and their efforts, and address the fees issues mentioned above and report back to this Committee at a future meeting.

### **Marketing and Interpretation**

Both subcommittee chairs were not available for this meeting. Therefore, no subcommittee meeting was held and there was nothing to report.

### **Programming and Operations**

Betsy Clark reported that the subcommittee received updates and/or discussed the following issues:

The Port Crescent lodging proposal by the Huron County Economic Development Corp. still needs to be presented to the Natural Resources Commission for consideration and approval of a feasibility study.

Bay City State Recreation Area is still having muck problems in Saginaw Bay and on the beach. The county is trying to groom (scoop) the muck off the beach and in the water thinking this will take care of the problem. However, it is an ongoing water quality (e-coli) problem that requires a long-term clean water strategy. Swimming and beach activity has been limited due to this problem and beach closures, which is having an affect on attendance at the recreation area.

Bay City State Recreation Area is proposing a Spray Park for children and adults. George Cameron reported that the committee working on this proposal are in the beginning stages, meeting and visiting with local community leaders and organizations, and will probably submit a recommendation in the near future. The park is looking for ways to get more visitors into the park and feel this would be a great opportunity/alternative for visitors to still come to the park and cool down.

The Artists-in-Residence program at the Porkies has been very successful. This program allows artists to stay for 2 weeks in exchange for a donated piece of artwork that can be displayed and one public presentation. They received 80 applications but were only able to accept 6. The first public presentation day was held July 21, and they had 30-40 people come to the park to watch the artist as she taught. Other scheduled artist attendance/presentation dates can be obtained on their web site.

The Committee was reminded that the third annual Porcupine Mountains Music Festival is scheduled for August 24-26, 2007 at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park.

It was reported that park staff intend to nominate the Friends of the Porkies for a department Conservation Award. If the department accepts this nomination, the award will be presented to the friends group.

Information regarding the Friends of the Porkies, the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, the Artist-in-Residence and the Folk School programs, and the Porcupine Mountains Music Festival all can be obtained on the Friends of the Porkies website at [www.porkies.org](http://www.porkies.org).

George Cameron commented that they are also considering developing a program similar to this at Tahquamenon Falls State Park. It was suggested that park staff also consider parks in the southern region, such as the Tri-Centennial State Park and Harbor, where approximately 650,000 people attended the first River Days Fest.

Coin operated showers will be installed at Grand Haven State Park. Park staff will continue to push coin-operated showers and will revisit this in the near future, to include considering other locations or opportunities for installing this type of system.

In other areas, Walloon Lake is trying to get a ramp installed, and the Tri-Centennial State Park and Harbor lease with the City of Detroit is, hopefully, in its final stages of negotiations. Staff will provide an update on the status of the lease at the next meeting.

Linda Warren reported on recommendations to establish a division-wide partnership with a petroleum company for a gas package, and a proposal to install laundry facilities at state parks. The committee asked that Linda write up proposals for these two items and present them at the next meeting for consideration.

### **Stewardship**

Mike McDonald referred the Committee to the stewardship report provided by Ray Fahlsing. No questions were raised and there were no further discussions regarding this report.

Mike further reported that no legislation has been introduced regarding the MCCC endowment fund. Brief discussions ensued regarding this matter. Mike stated he will ask Ray to prepare a briefing paper on the benefits of the MCCC program that this Committee can refer to, use or distribute when this issue comes up in the legislature.

Mike further reported that the Trust Fund appropriations bill (House Bill 4829) for fiscal year 2006-07 is still awaiting passage. This bill includes 34 recreational acquisition and 27 recreational development projects. He will keep the Committee posted on the status of this bill.

**MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS/NEXT MEETING****NRC Update**

Mary Brown commented that the Natural Resources Commission is considering establishing a state park subcommittee. She commented that this would be helpful because most of the issues presented to the NRC focus more on hunting, fishing, land or other policy issues. The formation of a state park subcommittee will not only get the NRC more acquainted with state park policies and issues, it will also allow this subcommittee to more formally and effectively address and make decisions on issues directly related to the state parks and recreation system. This subcommittee has not been developed yet, but the agreement is that it will be created in the near future.

**Trail Connectivity Endeavor**

Todd Scott referred Committee members to the Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance report contained in their packets titled, "Connecting Michigan – Trailways Vision and Action Plan." He gave a brief overview of their endeavors and reminded the Committee to review this report as Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director, will attend the next meeting to provide a brief overview and ask for this Committee's endorsement of the resolution that was also contained in their packets.

**Next Meeting**

Due to conflicts with the National Association of State Park Director's Conference, the next meeting will be rescheduled to September 19. A location for this meeting will be secured and members will be notified.

Mary Brown asked this Committee to consider having a representative of the equestrian community come to the next meeting to discuss/address this Committee. Ron Olson responded that they are in the process of finding a representative of the equestrian community to replace Janet Howard Washington on this Committee, and would prefer to hold off on a presentation of this nature until that person has been appointed.

A final comment was that the subcommittees should be allowed 1 full hour to meet.

Chair Jemerson asked, if there was no other business before this Committee, for a motion to adjourn; Mary Pitcher moved to adjourn; Tom Ferguson seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.